

# Scripture

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## VENGEANCE IS MINE

MODERN unbelief can sometimes present a very persuasive defence of its positions when these positions are considered in isolation. One position which it finds easy to defend is its rejection of the biblical and primitive Christian concept of an angry and avenging God. Anger, they say, is unworthy of a civilised man, and much less worthy of any alleged supreme being. The desire for revenge and the explosion of anger are signs of immaturity and barbarism at best, and can be cruel and bestial at worst. Christianity itself, they tell us, has implicitly rejected the earlier phases of biblical belief in its precept of bearing and forgiving injuries; and the Christian God should at least measure up to the idea which is imposed upon the Christian man.

This type of rationalisation is as old as Greek philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Euripides said that it was not fitting that the gods, like men, should be angry (*Bacchae*, 1348). Sextus Empiricus, followed by Cicero, said that it was a dogma of philosophers that the gods are impassible. Epicurus, followed by Plutarch, affirmed that the divine and the immortal experienced neither joy nor anger. Other philosophers affirmed the same truth, and the speculative theological system created by the schools of the Middle Ages denied the reality of any emotion in God. Many modern Christians have found the persuasions of unbelievers effective to the extent that these Christians are inclined to say that God is angry and vengeful only in the Old Testament; the law of love revealed in the New Testament has replaced the law of fear and wrath. It is a very simple and consoling way of believing; those who accept it are not worried at the incipient Marcionism which they nourish, because they have never heard of Marcion. Apparently they are not worried because the anger of God is found in the New Testament too; perhaps they do not remember reading these passages. Our philosophical conception of God does not permit us to attribute to Him the reality of anger; but our philosophical conception of God is not a comprehension of God as He is. The biblical anger of God is not a philosophical conception; but it must involve some

<sup>1</sup> The following quotations are taken from Kleinknecht, *ThWBNT* V, pp. 385 f.

reality, or the Bible is worthless as a source of the knowledge of God. What reality does it express?

Probably no-one will question whether the anger of God is found in the Old Testament; but a brief review of some texts will help us to see more clearly just what is meant by the anger of God in the Old Testament. It is anger, hot blazing anger; it manifests itself in a sudden and consuming flame (Jer. 17:4; Is. 65:5; 30:27; Ez. 21:36) which leaves the land a lifeless waste (Jer. 4:23-6). It is a raging storm which sweeps all before it (Jer. 30:23; Is. 30:27, 30). It is a bitter intoxicating drink which makes men reel and stagger (Is. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15f.). When Yahweh is angry He brandishes His strong arm, and there is no help for those upon whom His blow falls (Is. 63:5; 9:11). His anger is armed with a devouring sword which is sharpened for slaughter and whirls in every direction until it is sated with blood (Ez. 21). When Yahweh treads the wine press His garments are sprinkled with blood, for a day of revenge is in His heart (Is. 63:3-6).

Upon whom does Yahweh's anger fall? It falls in the first place upon Israel. The 'middle books' of the Pentateuch are a series of crises in which Israel provokes the anger of Yahweh by its unbelief, its lack of confidence in Him, and its rebellion against the leadership of Moses (Ex. 32; Num. 13:25-14:35; 18:5; 25). Even the chosen leader Moses excites Yahweh's anger by his hesitation (Ex. 4:14; Deut. 1:37). Aaron incurred anger for his part in the episode of the golden calf (Deut. 9:20) and for his questioning the authority of Moses; in the latter episode the anger of Yahweh smote Miriam with leprosy (Num. 12:1-10). The theme of Yahweh's anger recurs in the later historical books; either the whole people (1 Kg. 14:15; 2 Kg. 22:17) or such kings as Ahab (1 Kg. 16:33) and Manasseh (2 Kg. 23-6) arouse Yahweh's anger by the worship of Canaanite gods. It is this vice which provoked Yahweh to His greatest deed of anger: the destruction first of the kingdom of Israel (2 Kg. 17:17) and finally also of the kingdom of Judah. His anger was so great that He did not spare even the people whom He had chosen as His own.

Since Yahweh did not restrain His anger against Israel from its satisfaction, it is not surprising that He does not restrain His anger against other nations. He is not angry with them for worshipping their own gods, because they know no better. What infuriates Him is their pride and arrogance. This pride and arrogance is particularly offensive when they attack Israel and claim their success as their own. For they overcome Israel only because they are the rod of His anger (Is. 10:5ff.), and He is roused to fury by this implicit denial of His power to deliver His own people. In the early traditions of Genesis

the catastrophic anger of Yahweh strikes all humanity in the deluge (Gen. 6-8); and the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, while not universal in scope, is scarcely less fearful for being localised (Gen. 19). These cities were a monument of the fiery anger of Yahweh and are recalled several times in the Old Testament.

What angers Yahweh? Most frequently it is the worship of false gods. In addition to the passages from the historical books cited above this can be seen often in the prophets, of whom Jeremiah and Ezekiel are more than the others the prophets of the divine anger.<sup>1</sup> It may be noticed that Osee, the prophet of divine love and mercy, is also a prophet of divine anger. The anger of Yahweh is also provoked by human pride (Is. 9:11), by practical unbelief (Is. 9:16), by inhumanity (Is. 9:18, 20) and by assorted crimes and violations of His law (Ez. 5:13; 7:3, 8). The anger of Yahweh in such passages is not capricious nor unmotivated; it is excited by men's refusal to do exactly that which He insists they must do.

But this easy answer seems invalid for other passages in which the anger of Yahweh seems unmotivated, even capricious; some writers speak of an 'irrational' element in His anger. The term is admissible as long as we explain it within the categories of Israelite thought; and it is necessary to recall here that this thought is not logical discourse. Anger is one of the human terms in which Israel conceived God; but they knew that He is not human, that the ways of man are not His ways and that His actions cannot be explained by human motives. The motives of His anger, then, may lie too deep for human perception. The Israelites were affected by the common mode of conception of the ancient world which attributed all misfortune and disaster to divine anger. If men suffer it is because the gods are offended; but men do not always know in what they have offended. Israel in general conceived the anger of Yahweh as motivated by His moral will; but they were sufficiently aware of the mystery of divinity to realise that the depths of the moral will were not perceptible to man. They called the mystery of divinity 'holiness,' and they conceived that the anger of Yahweh could be an outburst of His holiness. Hence Yahweh could attack Jacob at Penuel (Gen. 32:23ff.) and Moses on His return to Egypt (Ex. 4:24ff.). One who approached too near to the 'holy,' the sphere of Yahweh Himself, or who saw His countenance, would die (Ex. 33:20; Jg. 13:22; Is. 6:5; Ex. 19:9-25; 20:18-21; Num. 1:52). He could strike men for what appeared to be an involuntary or at least not a serious lack of reverence (1 Sam. 6:19; 2 Sam. 6:7). The sudden death of poor Uzza as he tried

<sup>1</sup> Os. 5:10; 8:5; 13:11; Jer. 4:4, 8, 26; 7:20; 17:4; 32:31; 36:7; Ez. 6:12; 8:18; 14:19; 16:38; 20:8

to steady the ark on its wagon has always been a classic example of what one might call a certain irritability in Yahweh. Apart from the literary character of this piece of popular tradition, the concept of anger which it contains is a part of the problem; let anyone take comfort who can from the probability that this episode is not historical. He will scarcely be able to take the same comfort from the story of David's census and the ensuing plague, which is initiated by the anger of Yahweh against Israel (2 Sam. 24:1ff.). Yet this is precisely the Hebrew reasoning implicit in both stories; sudden disaster can have no cause except the anger of Yahweh. The Chronicler found this unsophisticated reasoning not entirely suitable and made Satan instead of Yahweh the one who moved David to take the census. Were it not for this simple assumption that Yahweh's anger is exhibited in misfortune and disaster, there would have been nothing for Job and his friends to debate. Let anyone who thinks that the problem of Job or Uzza is solved by a metaphysical analysis which denies the reality of the divine anger take comfort from that too; if he could analyse Job's pains out of existence with equal success he would solve the problem. The Hebrews had their way of putting it, and we have ours.

The Hebrews found the notion of divine anger intelligible because they believed the moral will of Yahweh was a serious will. Men, and especially men in the Orient, where emotion is displayed with a lack of restraint distressing to the Occidental, are angered when their serious will is flouted. To the Israelites an absence of anger would show that Yahweh was not serious. But anger is not the only emotion which they represented in Yahweh, and it is the background of His character as a whole that puts His anger in its proper proportion. His anger can be averted by petition and intercession such as the intercession of Moses for Israel<sup>1</sup> and of Amos for Israel (Am. 7:2, 5) and of Jeremiah for Judah (Jer. 14:7ff.; 18:20). Yahweh's anger, which annihilates unless it is restrained, is restrained by His patience; for He is slow to wrath and quick to forgive.<sup>2</sup> His anger is an outpouring of His justice, the instrument by which He accomplishes justice; for if evil were treated by Him in the same way as good, there would certainly be no justice. By a paradox which is most clearly revealed in Osee the anger of Yahweh is also an outpouring of His election and love of Israel; for He is a jealous God who treasures that which He loves and resents anything which takes it away from Him. From one who has received such love, disobedience and infidelity are not legal offences but personal insults.

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 32:11 ff., 31 ff.; Num. 11:1 ff.; 14:11 ff.; Deut. 9:19

<sup>2</sup> Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Nah. 1:3; Jon. 4:2; Ps. 103:8; Os. 11:9

At the risk of humanising the deity the OT represents Him in human terms: feeling and expressing love, mercy, compassion, patience—and anger. The reality of His anger is no more and no less than that of His love and mercy; and the reality of each consists properly in what man experiences from Him. Man can destroy the reality of the divine anger by surrendering entirely to the divine love and mercy.

Does the divine anger disappear in the New Testament? It does not disappear in Jesus, who was angry once.<sup>1</sup> This is a rare event, it is true; but the words which He used on more than one occasion are words which in anyone else would certainly be taken as expressions of anger. Such are His words to the Pharisees<sup>2</sup> and to the unbelieving crowd (Mt. 17:17). The words which He puts in His own mouth when He describes His function as a judge are likewise words of anger.<sup>3</sup> The common misconception of the New Testament may seem to have some support in the absence of any mention of the anger of God in the Gospels. But anger is attributed to the master or king in the parables, particularly at obstinate unbelief or inhumanity.<sup>4</sup> Nor should one forget that fire, which in the Old Testament is an outburst of divine anger, appears as an instrument of punishment in the New Testament<sup>5</sup>; those who heard the words of Jesus would not miss this allusion.

But if the anger of God is not mentioned in the Gospels, it is certainly mentioned frequently in the writings of Paul. We miss here the figures of fire and storm of the Old Testament; Paul could presume that these were known. But we read what we do not read in the Old Testament, that all men are objects of God's anger, 'children of wrath by nature' (Eph. 2:3). God's anger falls on those who suppress the truth (Rom. 1:18), on the Jews who impede the preaching of the Gospel (1 Thess. 2:16), on false teachers (Eph. 5:6), upon the impenitent (Rom. 2:4f.). Furthermore, Paul introduces a note suggested in the words of John the Baptist, 'the wrath to come' (Mt. 3:7; Lk. 3:7); this is the idea of the eschatological wrath, the wrath which is stored up by the impenitent against the 'day of wrath' (Rom. 2:4f.). 'The day of wrath' was already announced by Sophonias (Soph. 1:15, 18), but it is not eschatological in the New Testament sense. God 'brings wrath' when He judges the world, and without anger He could not judge the world justly (Rom. 3:5). Because God has stored up anger the Christian should not attempt to avenge himself but should 'give place to the wrath' which will execute all the

<sup>1</sup> Mk. 3:5, and in Mk. 1:41 in the text of D

<sup>2</sup> Mt. 12:34; 23:33; 15:7

<sup>3</sup> Mt. 21:12 ff.; 24:51; Lk. 13:27; 12:46

<sup>4</sup> Mt. 18:34; 22:7; Lk. 14:31; 19:27

<sup>5</sup> Mt. 3:12; 18:6 ff.; 25:41; Mk. 9:43-8

vengeance that is necessary (Rom. 12:19). The Apocalypse resumes all the Old Testament images of God's anger—fire, sword, vials and cups of wrath—in its picture of His judgments.<sup>1</sup> The particular force of this anger is that it is eschatological, final; it is the anger which is never appeased, which never gives way to forgiveness. It is as enduring as the human malice which provokes it.

Even more frightening perhaps is the 'vessel of wrath,' which in Pauline theology is made 'that He might show His glory and His power' (Rom. 9:22). Indeed these vessels are prepared for destruction (*ibid.*). We need not here explore the mystery of predestination, which has excited so much theological discussion involving this verse, except to say that Paul himself would probably recognise no theological theory of predestination as expressing his own belief. What this phrase meant to him may be seen in the fact that he introduces this paragraph with an affirmation of God's justice (v. 14). One may say that the subsequent verses are an implicit affirmation that Paul does not understand God's justice, and I think he did not; one would like to meet the man who does understand it. A vessel of wrath gets what it deserves, and God's glory is seen in His treatment of the vessels of wrath. His power is also seen, the power which is great enough to prevent the wicked from destroying goodness.

The anger of God then is not absent from the New Testament; like the anger of God in the Old Testament, it must be considered against a larger background. Those who believe that the New Testament 'law of love' excludes the Old Testament anger of God should be ready to admit that the themes of love and mercy are present in the New Testament; what they have difficulty in admitting is that the themes of love and mercy must make room for the theme of anger. If Jesus and St Paul could grasp this, they wish that we should grasp it too. God's love of righteousness is balanced by His hatred of iniquity; this hatred is not a philosophical rejection, but a personal response of hostility which must be called by a name strong enough to make its reality apparent; the name they chose is anger.

The New Testament ultimately does not escape from the anger of God by denying its reality. It escapes in the affirmation, important enough to be repeated three times in the New Testament, that it is Jesus who delivers man from the divine anger (Jn. 3:36; Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10). He is the incarnation of the love and mercy of God, a pledge superior to all promises that God is slow to anger but quick to forgive, patient and long suffering beyond comprehension. He is

<sup>1</sup> 6:16; 11:18; 14:19; 16:1, 19; 19:15



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the supreme revelation of the love of God for man. Let us not forget that this is the love which saves us from the anger of God. We believe that the deliverance which Jesus wrought is a real deliverance which no man can accomplish for himself. The reality of the redemption is as great, no more and no less, as the reality of God's anger. For if there were no anger, there would be nothing from which we would need to be delivered.

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### THE QUENCHING OF THIRST: REFLECTIONS ON THE UTTERANCE IN THE TEMPLE, JOHN 7:37-9

THE invitation of Christ to come and drink, as recorded in John 7:37-9, is of the most direct appeal possible, and yet to judge by the numerous and often contradictory comments made on it, beset by difficulties: must we put a full-stop after 'let him come to me and drink'? from whom do the rivers of living water flow? what exactly is the 'scripture-text' referred to?—and others. All these questions must be answered as far as it is possible to answer them, but perhaps in trying to do so we neglect to see the text in a larger field of vision. The object of these brief reflections is to attempt to show one or two ways of doing just that—in particular by concentrating not on these individual problems but on the literary form of the passage and the motif which it contains.

Even a superficial reading of St John's Gospel would suffice to bring to our notice the recurrence of some short phrases which were evidently meant to serve as notes explanatory of more difficult or obscure points in the gospel, or to emphasise sayings or actions which were seen to be of special significance. Some are merely topographical, mentioning the place where certain words were spoken or some miracle performed. Thus, at the end of John the Baptist's witness to Christ, we are told: 'These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan where John was baptising' (1:28), and so for the miracle at Cana, the eucharistic discourse in the synagogue at Capharnaum, and elsewhere. Others have as their object to clear up obscurities for such as were not familiar with the Palestinian scene or to introduce some new *dramatis persona* and establish his or her identity, as with the sister of Martha who was the same as the woman in the incident in the house of Simon the Leper (11:2). Others again, and the greatest

number, were inserted to explain the sense of words spoken by the actors in the drama; the parents of the man born blind (9:22-3), the high-priest who makes his mysterious prophecy (11:51-2), Judas who complains of the wasted ointment (12:6) and even the words of the prophet with which John ends the 'Book of Signs.'<sup>1</sup> More important than all these, however, was comment required after the great utterances of Christ which this gospel records, and we notice how often recurs the theme of the non-comprehension of his words by the hearers. In some cases this is mentioned only in passing, but elsewhere the explanation takes on a definite and recognisable physiognomy. The saying about the Temple (2:21-2), the prophetic gesture of the messianic ride into the city (12:16) and the invitation to drink (7:37) all have reference to an action which communicates, in the language of symbol, the living truth of the messianic presence of Jesus. In the first two cases it is Jesus himself who acts, at the feast of Booths. His words were spoken at the time of and very probably with reference to the joyful and meaningful liturgy of the Water Libation.<sup>2</sup> In all three cases the symbolism of the act is given depth by the quoting of a scripture text, and it is stated that the hearers did not understand at the time but that the meaning only went home with the coming of the illuminating presence of the Spirit, itself dependent on Jesus being glorified. In these texts, then, we find a definite pattern which consists of prophetic sign or saying, scripture text and interpretative comment. This gives us the cue for reading our text in the following way:

On the last day—the Great Day—of the feast, Jesus stood up (or perhaps, was standing) and cried out:

*Saying:* If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink (that is, the believer in me).

*Text:* As the Scripture text says: Rivers of living water shall flow from his midst.

*Interpretation:* This He said of the Spirit which the believers in him were going to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not been glorified.

Read in this way, it is seen as an example of a literary pattern which in its turn reflects the basic thematic structure of the work as a whole; and is very revealing of the theology which dictated what that structure

<sup>1</sup> The term is used of the first part of the gospel up to the Passion by C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. 23:33-5 has caused some difficulty in regard to the chronology of the feast; some writers have placed the last of the water-libations on an eighth and even a ninth day; see G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 1946, p. 43. It is, however, more generally accepted that this liturgy took place only up to a seventh day, the 'Great Day.'



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should be like. Thus we can readily understand that the giving of the Spirit is, theologically speaking, the watershed of the Fourth Gospel; on the one side, incomprehension, on the other, the illumination which is not denied to the believer, to him who 'comes to' Christ.<sup>1</sup> That is why the first part of the gospel, the signs and sayings which are spoken 'in figures' (Jn. 16:25-9), ends on the sombre note of the quotation from Isaias which was, as we know from the Synoptics, the *locus classicus* for the scandal and mystery of the rejection of the Christ; after that point the author goes at once into the account of the Passion or 'glorification' which culminates in the giving of the Spirit in accordance with a promise often repeated.

Coming back to the saying which we have seen to be central in the passage, we note that it is prefaced by the statement that Jesus stood up and cried out. The author here uses the solemn verb *krazo* to denote an enunciation of special importance as is the case elsewhere. In Rom. 9:27, for instance, we find it used of a declaration from Isaias which is given special importance, and also in the Fourth Gospel itself where it introduces a series of sayings on messianic faith and rejection, strongly reminiscent of similar sayings in St Matthew, while both have strong points of contact with some expressions in the Wisdom literature, especially Proverbs.<sup>2</sup> This provides a valuable clue to the literary milieu of the utterance we are considering and is confirmed by another consideration, namely, that the invitation formula, found likewise in John and Matthew, introduces many expressions in the sapiential books. Thus, in Prov. 1:20:

Wisdom cries aloud in the street;  
In the markets she raises her voice

and further on, she takes up her stand (using the same verb as in Jn. 7:37) and calls out (Prov. 8:6). We find an invitation even closer in form to that in our text in the next chapter of Proverbs where Wisdom 'has sent her maids to call from the highest places in the town: Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!'—all of which suggests that standing up and crying out was a common literary convention applied to Wisdom personified.

<sup>1</sup> To 'come to' Christ in St John is synonymous for 'to believe.' cf. 6:35; 3:20 (to come to the Light); 5:40.

<sup>2</sup> Jn. 12:44-5 and Mt. 10:40-1, which latter follows three sayings on discipleship which use expressions echoing strongly sapiential sayings. Thus, the verb *philein* (to love) for the relationship between Jesus and his disciples and the adjective *haxios* (worthy) with gen. of person; cf. Wis. 8:2 and Prov. 8:17. On this point see remarks of A. Feuillet in *Biblica* 1958, pp. 295-6. It should be noted, however, that *philein* in the sense given, though unusual, is not quite *hapax* in the New Testament. In 1 Cor. 16:22 it is used of Christ and also in Jn. 16:27, due perhaps to the earlier 'the Father loves (*philei*) you.' There is also the curious interchange between the verbs *philein* and *agapan* in the threefold affirmation of love on the part of Peter in Jn. 21:15-17.

It is striking in reading these texts how often literary formula and pattern go hand in hand with motif, taking this latter in the sense of a concrete, non-conceptual figure (e.g. making a feast, drinking living water) which, like a motif in music, is significant because it tends to recur in a given context. Thus, to take an example mentioned already, we find that when Wisdom cries aloud this saying is put on her lips: 'They will seek me diligently but they will not find me,' which we have practically in the same words from the mouth of Jesus, in a saying placed very near to that uttered at the feast of Booths (Jn. 7:34). With this we can also compare the little collection of sayings on prayer in Mt. 7:7-11, transcribed presumably from an earlier source to which St Luke also had access, and note in particular the recurrence of the verb 'to seek' (*zēteîn*) and the motif of the quest which is classic in the sapiential books and the literature which has been, directly or indirectly, inspired by them.<sup>1</sup> We find another example of motif recurrence in Prov. 9, where Wisdom is a king issuing his invitation to a banquet, and in the parable of the king (or, a certain man in Luke) who made a marriage feast. Indeed the evangelical *mašal* develops motifs, many if not most of which are prominent throughout the Wisdom literature. There are, in fact, apart from the full-length *mešalim* or parables, several shorter specimens introduced by the formula: 'To what shall I compare? . . . reminiscent on the one hand of rabbinical didactic methods and on the other of Wisdom formulas.'<sup>2</sup> This brings us back to the text on the quenching of thirst which illustrates and is illustrated by this tendency. The use of the figure: 'living water' or 'fountains of water' or water *tout court* for Wisdom was a commonplace in the literature of all that long epoch in which the sapiential genre was current—right through from the sapiential Psalms and Proverbs to the allegorical exegetes of the Alexandrian school. It often spilled over into other genres in use at that time, and is found more than once in the apochryphal gospels and apocalypses. In reference to secret gnosis or doctrines communicated, Jesus, in the recently published coptic book of Sayings, is made to say to Didymos Thomas the *mustēs* or initiate: 'I am not thy master, because thou hast drunk, thou hast become drunk from the bubbling spring which I have measured out.' In Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) the God-fearer, in the same way, is said to drink the waters of Wisdom (Sir. 15:3) and in the well-known twenty-fourth chapter of the same book it is said of the Thorah—

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Wis. 1:1-2; 6:12; Prov. 1:28; 8:17

<sup>2</sup> cf. Mt. 11:16-9 with Prov. 1:24 and Ben Sirach 4:11. In the Lukan parallel (7:31ff.) the saying is referred explicitly to Wisdom. Other themes treated in this way are: the rich fool, the great feast, hidden treasure, calculations for war—all of which can be easily illustrated from both the Synoptics and the Wisdom books.

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personified as Wisdom in accordance with the religious and philosophical propaganda of diaspora Judaism :

They who eat of me will yet hunger,  
And they who drink of me will yet thirst,

words which are strongly reminiscent of *logia* in John and are not without bearing on our text as we shall see. In fact in the same chapter there is a passage which I suggest is of some significance for the study of the invitation to drink in Jn. 7:37. The author—in keeping with a type of midrashic homily common in that literature, compares Wisdom (the Law) to the life-giving river which in old biblical tradition flowed out of Eden forming four other tributary rivers, and he makes the wise man say :

I am like a water course coming from the river and like a waterway leading into paradise . . . and lo, my water course has become a river and the river has turned into a sea.

The similarity of these words to the Johannine text which speaks of living water, striking though it is in terms of literary comparison, is even more so in the light of the thought-world—the *Gedankengang*—of the gospel as a whole. In fact, what Ben Sirach, an Alexandrian Jew, says of the Thorah, John predicates of Christ ; both are considered as hypostases or personifications of Wisdom, and it is surely not an accident that John should have made one of the basic themes of his gospel the antithesis between Christ and the Thorah, as he has enunciated in the prologue :

The Thorah was given through Moses,  
Grace and Truth through Jesus Christ. (Jn. 1:17)

The same idea underlies many of the 'signs' or miracles : the water for the rites of purification, the wine that is given by Christ, the well of 'our father, Jacob' contrasted with the living water promised to the Samaritan woman, and others. We know, in fact, that in the thought-world in which the gospel was written and to which it contributed, two tendencies were at work which can be at least indirectly illustrated from the gospel itself, and throw some light upon its major themes. In the first place, under the influence of Greek speculative thought and Stoic ideas in particular, Wisdom as an hypostasis or person tended to merge with the Logos, the divine principle at work in the creation and ordering of the world. In Philo, Wisdom and Logos are practically identical and in the Christian Alexandrians the identification is complete. This tendency could be illustrated further from other literary currents which emerged in the

inter-testamentary period. In the Book of Henoch, for example, Wisdom is seen as having her place in heaven, coming to earth only to be rejected, and returning whence she came to be poured out in the latter days as water from which all who are thirsty may drink their fill.<sup>1</sup> We have already seen that the quenching of thirst with the water that makes wise is thematic in the Apocryphal writings and among those who attempted a synthesis between the words of Christ and the currents and cross-currents of thought which we refer to summarily and inclusively as Gnosticism.

At the same time another tendency was at work, this time within normative Judaism, which aimed at resisting the dangers inherent in this process of hypostasising abstract qualities—the old danger of polytheistic superstition in particular, so that the Torah came to be regarded as the only legitimate and adequate object of which Wisdom could be predicated. All this was doubtless a reaction against what was going on in the enemy camp after the schism of the Christian or Nazarene sect. In this context of contemporary history and against this background John's concept of Christ becomes more fully intelligible. We know in fact from early tradition that he wrote the gospel as a counter-blast to the gnostic heretic Cerinthus, and it is not unnatural that in doing so he should fight his opponent with the latter's own weapons. In this light the saying on living water would illustrate admirably John's doctrine of spiritual, Christian gnosis—which, for St John, is the same as eternal life (John 17:3). In this connection we can note that Origen who, more perhaps than any other commentator on this gospel, brings us near to the inner world of ideas in which it was written, goes not to the many parallel passages in the prophets for the source of the quotation, but to the Wisdom books. He quotes, for example, from Prov. 5:15 and 9:4 where 'Wisdom which, according to hypostasis is the same as the Word (Logos) of God' stands up and cries out.<sup>2</sup> He found ample material in these writings to justify and expand his teaching that the Christian himself must become a source of knowledge and therefore of life for others. Such texts as the following from Prov. 5:15-16 were read by him with this meaning:

Drink water from your own cistern,  
Flowing water from your own well.  
Should your streams be scattered abroad,  
Streams of water in the streets?

This served him as an illustration for the Christian gnosis which begins as a well, overflows and becomes a stream, and then grows

<sup>1</sup> Henoch 84:3; 94:5; 98:1; 99:1

<sup>2</sup> Homily on Ps. 2:5 in *Opera* ed. Delargue, II, p. 550.

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into a mighty river. The idiom which he speaks here is not essentially different, it seems, from that in Jn. 7:37-9.

The *logion* of Christ at the feast of Booths is therefore sapiential both in form and in content—with reference, that is, to the sapiential motifs of living water which is poured out and the quenching of thirst. There is also, as we have seen, evidence for supposing that what we have here is a text, which represents Jesus as hypostatic Wisdom hidden indeed in his real identity from the eyes and the understanding of those who heard that cry in the Temple on that day, but revealed through the ministry of the Spirit which enlightens the baptised intelligence. A corollary to this would be that we have here a valuable point of contact with the Synoptic Gospels going beyond the text referred to as the Johannine Logion (Mt. 11:25-30 par.) and this could raise the question whether both they and John were able to draw upon, to a greater or lesser extent, some earlier collection or collections of *Logia Kuriaka* or Sayings of Our Lord which had already, in the early years of the bitter polemic between Church and Synagogue, presented him to the contemporary world as not only greater than Solomon (Mt. 12:41 and Lk. 11:31) but—in opposition to the false claims of the Torah—as Christ, the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24).

We saw at the beginning how the structure of this passage illustrates a typical process in the Fourth Gospel. It presents some facet of the mysterious identity of the Protagonist by means of a symbolic action or utterance, accompanied by a Scripture quotation and interpretative comment. Here there is the specific difference that the prophetic action is not performed by Jesus himself, but was witnessed by him and his hearers in the course of the liturgy of the last day of the feast of Tabernacles. Coming in the month of Tishri—the end of September and the beginning of October—it corresponded to the time of year when expectation of the winter rains was at its highest. From the regulations which governed the observance of the feast and its liturgy (Lev. 22 ; Num. 29:12-39) we can get some idea of what it meant to the faithful who took part in it. It had been originally superimposed upon a harvest festival, the rain-making character of which was explicit, and this aspect was never really lost sight of, as later writers testify. In the rabbinical tractate *Roš ha-Šanah* (New Year's Day) we read : ' Why does the Torah say : Make a libation of water at the feast ? The Holy One (blessed is He !) says : Make a libation of water before me at the feast that the rains of the year may be blessed to you.' The bearing of the Lulab in one hand and the Ethrog in

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the other—three water plants bound together and an orange or lemon respectively—the waving of these three times to the four points of the compass and the procession seven times round the altar seem to have had, originally at least, the same significance. As for the libation of water itself, it took place on each day of the celebrations but climactically on the last, the Great Day. It consisted in a procession of the priests to the pool of Siloam whose waters were fed from the spring of the Virgin by means of Ezekiel's tunnel. Here a gold jug was filled with water; then they returned by the Water Gate where their coming was announced to the crowd by three blasts on a trumpet, and finally there was the seven-fold procession round the altar. Then one of the priests mounted the ramp at the side of the altar and raising his hands on high so that all could see them,<sup>1</sup> poured the water into a silver funnel whence it flowed into the ground. All this was to the overwhelming applause and joy of the worshippers present who, as Josephus and the rabbis give us to understand, followed every detail of the ceremony with passionate interest. This joy was, to the onlooker, the most spectacular thing of all and was the climax of all the religious enthusiasm which the great feasts always occasioned. We are told: 'He that has never seen the joy of the *Beth ha-She'ubah* has never in his life seen joy.'<sup>2</sup>

This ceremony was moreover accompanied by the singing of the whole or a part of the Hallel-psalms 113-18 and especially Psalm 118 in which occurs the phrase:

This is the day which the Lord has made;  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
Save us, we beseech Thee, O Lord!  
O Lord, we beseech Thee, give us success!

This invocation was repeated many times. It has been pointed out too that the first of the psalms of this collection contains the reference to the giving of the water from the rock in the desert (Ps. 113:8), a text associated in its turn with that of Isaiah 12:3: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation'—which good rabbinical tradition has associated with the water libation at the feast. In view of the other examples of images or 'types' occurring in this Gospel and which can be traced to the Exodus—the Brazen Serpent and the Manna in particular—it is possible that the author had the incident of the rock in mind but this would not, of course, prejudice the

<sup>1</sup> Admonished by the example of Alexander Jannaeus who poured it over his feet and was pelted by the crowd and almost lynched! See Josephus, *Ant.* XIII, 13, 51 and the rabbinical tract *Sukkah* 4, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Sukkah* 4, 9. The Hebrew phrase means 'the place of the drawing' (of water).



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question of the literary form of the saying which is, as we have tried to demonstrate, sapiential.

If, as it seems, this was in fact the actual historical context in which Our Lord made this invitation to drink and quench the thirst, we see how the symbolism achieves deeper resonance and a new dimension. In his comment the author has referred the outpouring to the Spirit which was to be given, and it is significant that a constant theme of rabbinical tradition has connected the water-libation of the feast with the outpouring of the Spirit in the Age of the Messiah. According to Rabbi bar-Kahana (c. A.D. 130) the feast holds within itself the promise of the Messiah, and a vague expectation that he would appear in the month of Tishri persisted long after the days of Jesus Christ. Again, the tractate on this feast in the Jerusalem Talmud explains the name of the ceremony by referring to the Isaian test quoted above, explaining the name 'Place of Drawing' from the fact that it was 'from there that they drew the Holy Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> This is very close to the quotation which St Peter made from Joel on the day of Pentecost to account for the ecstatic phenomena which took place at that time.

In the Quenching of Thirst passage, then, we have a combination of symbolic action and sapiential saying which refers to the action, accompanied by a word of explanation making the spiritual context plain for the Christian reader. The whole is symbolical in the sense of being a sign (not, however, in the strict Johannine sense of sign as synonym for miracle) pointing to the ultimately mysterious identity of the central figure. It speaks in a language at once more complex and more direct than that of definition, namely, in the idiom of symbolism, in the way that Jung has defined a sign or symbol as 'the best possible expression of a relatively unknown thing.'<sup>2</sup> In this sense the quenching of thirst is, for the man open to the persuasive force of this idiom, that deep and lasting satisfaction and utter self-fulfilment that comes through the knowledge of and association with the living God. Not that it was understood so at the time, as the comment makes clear, but addressed to the baptised Christian it would be fully comprehensible. This too was part of the sapiential tradition—the necessity of initiation for gnosis and comprehension of the Christian mysteries, and it is natural that just as Christ was represented vividly to early Christians as the element into which they were baptised and, in point of fact, 'living water' was prescribed for baptism where possible,<sup>3</sup> he himself should be referred to as the Living

<sup>1</sup> *Sukkah* 55a

<sup>2</sup> In the chapter on Definitions in *Psychological Types*, trans. H. G. Baynes, 1938

<sup>3</sup> *Didache* 7, 1; Hippolytus 5, 14; *Acts of Thomas* 52, etc.

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Water.<sup>1</sup> Though St John nowhere speaks explicitly of the two great Christian sacraments in the gospel—probably due to the discipline of the secret then considered binding—no Christian would have missed the strong sacramental associations of this and other sayings and signs strewn about the gospel. In this way, as we saw at the beginning, the text speaks on two levels : to those who having ears could not or would not hear, and on the other hand to the baptised intelligence of those who have received the Spirit ; and the need of the Christian of today to quench his thirst at the mystery of Christ participated through the sacramental life of the Church is no less great than that of John's Christians at Ephesus.

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THE last few lines of St Matthew's gospel are familiar, perhaps too familiar to every apologist. Indeed they are part of his stock in trade. They are quoted to demonstrate so many points of Catholic teaching. This, of course, is not surprising when we consider how comprehensive a text Mt. 28:18ss. is. In the space of two verses Matthew tells us of the extent of Christ's authority, the mission of the Apostles, the importance of baptism ; he names the three Persons of the Trinity, and ends with Christ's promise to be with his Apostles until the end of time. So concise a text deserves to be familiarly known. And yet, while the first parts of this text are often explained at length, the last sentence is apparently somewhat neglected. 'Behold I am with you all days until the end of the world.' This phrase is quoted usually in connection with the stability and infallibility of the Church, but it is very seldom that very much comment is passed upon it. The reason for this is probably that the words are so clear in themselves that any comment would seem to be superfluous. In fact it is difficult to express what they say in any simpler words. Of course we can start with this phrase as a premise, and argue to further conclusions—that the Church will last until the end of time for instance, or that Christ will always protect his church. But such are conclusions and not comments on the meaning of the words themselves.

<sup>1</sup> We might mention here a curious ascription to Thymoteus, one of the early Manichaeans, 'About baptism he spoke in the same way, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ was himself the Baptism and that there was no other, in accordance as it is written : I am the Living Water.' This is found in Petrus Siculus, *Historia Manichaeorum*, PG 104, 1284 ; where it was written must remain a matter for speculation.

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To understand this phrase fully, we must first ascertain what it meant to those who first heard it from Christ. In the context, they have just received the mission of preaching the Gospel to the whole world. They are to make disciples of the whole world—an enormous task which has not yet been completed, and a task which must have seemed impossible to these eleven ordinary men. Surely some of the difficulties involved must have crossed their minds when they thought of what Christ had said. 'He charges them to make the hardest of all conquests, and what he requires of them is to all appearance impossible, indeed inconceivable. There are but a dozen workers, obscure, timid, knowing nothing of the great world, and he wills that they shall scatter over the world, face powerful forces, triumph over enemies, over hostility to their race, over sarcasm and mockery, that they shall stifle hatred and win souls and hearts.'<sup>1</sup>

With such a task ahead of them it is easy to imagine the Apostles asking, 'How are we to achieve this? We are not capable of so difficult a task.' Matthew does not give us the Apostles' question, their doubts or fears, but he does give us Christ's answer to that question, whether it was asked or not: 'Behold, I am with you.'

For this situation was not a new one, except in the particular details of the command. Throughout the Old Testament God carried out his designs, by appointing envoys to speak on His behalf, and make known his will. And it was not an uncommon thing for these envoys to protest that they were not capable of carrying out their allotted task. It is in these and similar contexts that we find God encouraging them with the promise 'I will be with you.'

Thus God chose Moses to go to Pharaoh and demand the release of God's chosen people. Moses is certain that such a mission is beyond him: 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt? But He said, I will be with you. . . .' Again Moses protested, 'Oh my Lord I am not eloquent . . . I am slow of speech and of tongue.' Then the Lord said to him, 'Go and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you will speak' (Ex. 3:12; 4:10). And a similar promise is made to Moses and Aaron together. It is clear that God's promise to be with Moses is meant to encourage him and remove his fear. It is a promise of definite positive assistance, for God will put the words in the mouth of Moses. And it is with this assurance that Moses sets out and accomplishes his mission. On the death of Moses, God chooses Joshua to succeed to his position and to lead the chosen people into the promised land. Again it is a formidable undertaking, involving many difficulties. Once more, therefore, God promises his help:

<sup>1</sup> Leon Cristiani, *Why We Believe*, p. 9

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No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life ; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you, and I will not fail you or forsake you. . . . Have I not commanded you ? Be strong and of good courage ; be not frightened, neither be dismayed ; for Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go. (Jos. 1:5ss.)

Similarly, we read in Isaías :

You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off, fear not for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God. (Is. 41:10)  
Fear not for I am with you, I will bring your offspring from the east and from the west I will gather you. (Is. 43:5)

Hence we can see that the promise to be with a person or a group is intended to remove fear and apprehension. And the fear is removed precisely because God promises positive assistance. He promises that the mission will be a success despite the shortcomings of the chosen envoy. This element of success is already clear to some extent in the quotations given above. However in others it is more evident still. In Genesis, for instance, the promise is made to Jacob in these words : ' Behold I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land ; for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you ' (Gen. 28:15). God therefore intends to see that Jacob achieves his mission. It is perhaps worth noting also, that that of which God has spoken to Jacob is the spread of His chosen people all over the world : ' and your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north and to the south,' a passage not unlike that of Mt. 28. A more striking parallel still, however, is to be found in the call of the prophet Jeremias :

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying . . . ' I appointed you a prophet to the nations.' Then I said, ' Ah Lord God, behold I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.' But the Lord said to me, ' Do not say I am only a youth ; for to all to whom I shall send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.' . . . ' Arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land. . . . They will fight against you ; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you.' (Jer. 1:4-19)

The situation here is indeed quite similar to that at the end of Matthew's Gospel. In both instances there is the command to preach, and to preach only what they are told to preach. In both God promises to be with them. In the quotation from Jeremias we have his protestation and a fuller description of the help that God will give to him. Moreover he is warned that there will be opposition to his message, whereas the Apostles are left to presume it. To meet this opposition

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Jeremias is promised great strength and power, so that his enemies will not gain the victory. His success is guaranteed. And the guarantee is precisely the fact that God will be with him. . . . If the promise made to Jeremias carries with it this guarantee of success, and the strength to achieve it, that to the Apostles must be just as great : Jeremias's mission is to one nation, the Apostles' to all nations.

In Deut. 20 we find instructions on how the Jews are to prepare for battle. Here again God promises His assistance, even to the extent of fighting for them :

When you go forth to war against your enemies . . . and see an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them ; for the Lord your God is with you . . . and the priest shall say to them : ' Hear O Israel, you draw near this day to battle against your enemies ; do not fear, or tremble or be in dread of them ; for the Lord your God is He that goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.' (Deut. 20:1ss.)

Once again the promise is made to those facing a difficult situation—a battle with the odds against them. But they are assured of victory because God is with them. On the other hand, when God is not with them in battle, they are defeated ; as, for instance, in Num. 14:41ss., where we are told explicitly that God was not with them, and the battle was lost.

Taking the phrase ' I am with you ' therefore, in these contexts, it is seen to imply a promise that God will bring to a successful conclusion the work that He has entrusted to men, giving them the necessary strength and power to achieve it. Moreover, there is an impression that God will intervene in a special way, giving them positive assistance in their mission, an assistance over and above His ordinary concurrence in every human action.

What then did the Apostles understand by this phrase when it was spoken to them by Christ ? What did Matthew's readers understand by it, remembering that they were Jews, familiar with the Old Testament ? Surely they would be well aware of its significance and its history, and remember how and where it had been used in the past. And we presume that Matthew intended them to do just that. For as we have said, the situation was new only in detail, and this phrase might help to make that clear. Once again God is choosing His envoys and sending them out to fulfil a difficult task. Once more He is promising to be with them in their work. Consequently they can proceed with confidence and be certain of success. They need have no fear. He will teach them what to say—just as He was with the mouth of Moses He will be with their mouths ; they shall speak what He has commanded, just as Jeremias spoke the words of Yahweh. There will be opposition, but it will be ineffective, against the strength

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and power given to God's new envoy the Church. In a word it is a promise that the mission Christ entrusted to his Apostles will be successful in all its aspects.

Consequently it is a pity that when this text is used in Apologetics, its use is so frequently restricted to showing that the Church will last for all time. It is a guarantee of much more than that. Because the Church's mission is to all men, it is a guarantee that the Church will reach all men. Because the mission of the Church is holy, this promise is a guarantee that the Church will never lack holiness. It is a guarantee that the Church will always receive that power and divine assistance she needs to achieve her end. On the other hand, it is not a promise that the Church will never fall into difficulties. Christ never promised that there would be no bad popes, no schism, no heresy, or no persecution. Indeed he prophesied there would be false teachers who would deceive even the elect. But in promising to be with his Church he was in effect saying, 'When these things happen, I will be with you to deliver you.' And the facts of history bear this out. Take for example the Great Western Schism, which rocked the Church from top to bottom. Yet she survived where any merely human society would have collapsed, because Christ was 'with her.' In the course of the Church's history there have been bad priests, bad bishops, even bad popes, and every generation sees a considerable number of Catholics lapse and apostatise; yet the Church continues because Christ is 'with her.' Far from contradicting the promise of Christ, these objections to the sanctity of the Church only go to emphasise the fact that he has kept it. Indeed they can be used to convince the unbeliever of the power of God in the Church. Looking at the varied history of the Church, seeing her survival despite attacks from within and without, the unbeliever should have to confess of the Church what Nicodemus confessed of Christ: 'We know you are a teacher come from God; for no-one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him' (Jn. 3:2).

It may now be asked in what way Christ gives this power promised in the phrase, 'I will be with you all days to the end of the world.'

Shortly before the Ascension the Apostles, showing a lack of understanding of the mission of Christ, ask him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?' Christ does not answer that question directly, but in a polite way tells them to mind their own business, and then he adds, 'but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' (Ac. 1:6, 8). This tells us more or less the same truth which is contained in the last verse of Matthew's Gospel. But there is this



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difference : Matthew gives us a command and a promise, Luke in the Acts gives us a prophecy. A prophecy that the Church will spread throughout the world, and it will do so by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit of truth that is to take the place of Christ when Christ has returned to the Father. Christ had already promised to ask the Father to send this Spirit 'to be with you forever. . . . The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send, in my name, will teach you all things and bring to your mind all that I have said to you' (Jn. 14:16, 26). It is by the Spirit, therefore, that the Apostles will be enabled to fulfil the command of Christ to teach all nations. This is not surprising, when we recall that the Spirit is often the instrument of God's power in the Bible, and that, as has been said, the promise of Christ to be with his Church is in effect a promise to give the Church the power to carry out its task. Furthermore, there are many examples in the Old and New Testaments at least suggesting that there is a definite connection between the promise of God to be with someone and the reception of the Spirit by that person. Thus in Sam. 10:6ss., 'Then the Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you . . . and you shall be turned into another man . . . for God is with you.' In Jg. 6:11ss., in the story of Gideon, we read :

And the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said to him, 'the Lord is with you, you mighty man of valour . . . go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of the Midian.' . . . And the Lord said to him, 'I will be with you and shall smite the Midians as one man.'

A little later we find that 'the Spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon,' and he defeated the Midians, although they greatly outnumbered his troop. A similar passage appears in the New Testament, and is indeed one very familiar to us :

The angel Gabriel was sent by God . . . to a virgin . . . and he said to her, 'Hail O favoured one, the Lord is with you . . . do not be afraid, for you have found favour with God. . . . The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most High will overshadow you. . . .' (Lk. 1:26ss.)

It would seem, therefore, that the presence of God and His assistance implied in the phrase 'the Lord is with you' are accomplished through the power of the Spirit. And by this power the Church continues, and will continue to the end of the world, to fulfil the command of Christ to bring salvation to all men. What is more, she can be certain of success in this work. With confidence the Church can say : 'The Lord is with me ; I do not fear ; what can man do to me ? The Lord is with me to help me ; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me' (Ps. 117:6-7).

In the course of time 'the Lord be with you' has become perhaps

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the commonest of all Christian greetings and prayers. St Paul uses it frequently at the end of his epistles (2 Cor. 13:11 ; Phil. 4:9, etc.), and it is found also in the Old Testament, as for instance in Ru. 2:4. Nowadays, however, it is heard so often that it tends to have little or no meaning at all. Seven times in the Mass the priest says *Dominus vobiscum*, and the same little phrase appears countless times throughout the Breviary. In general, it is found almost always before every collect or set of collects in the Church's Liturgy. In English 'God be with you' has unfortunately been contracted to 'goodbye' and hence has lost all meaning for us. Yet these phrases do mean something. From their biblical contexts we can see that in themselves they are prayers for the success of the undertaking in hand. The *Dominus vobiscum* is in fact a prayer that Christ will join the prayers of the Church to his own, and thus ensure that they will be granted.

B. EAGER

#### BOOK REVIEWS

L. Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St Paul*. Tr. by Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker. Herder and Herder, New York ; Nelson, Edinburgh 1959. pp. 419. 45s.

What is the Church ? Or more exactly, what is the *res Christiana*—is Church in fact the best name for it ? What sort of a grouping or community is it ? What are the exact relative relationships between Christ, the individual Christian and other Christians ?

These must be fascinating questions for any Christian ; and they have a special importance today. But surely the first prerequisite to any discussion or any philosophical or even theological study of the question must be a knowledge of what revelation has to say about it. And in the first place this will surely mean a knowledge of what St Paul has to say about it.

That is what Mgr Cerfaux's great work is concerned with—simply to find out what St Paul thinks about the Christian community. He is, he says, 'not concerned with the fact of the Church so much as with St Paul's idea of it.' This marks the extent and the limits of his work.

Certain limits are therefore obvious ; he is not concerned with Church organisation, liturgy, apostolate, sacraments and so on. But this does not reduce the book to a simple list of statements—the sort of thing anyone could do, given a good concordance and patience.

Cerfaux is only interested in facts ; but the facts are not as straightforward as that ; and the author is not satisfied till he has extracted the essence of Paul's thought from the surrounding obscurity of terminology and opinion.

This involves first of all following out the development of Paul's own thought. Cerfaux sees two main influences which have guided him—the Jewish ideas which formed his mental equipment at his conversion, and his actual experience of the Christian life in his apostolate. These two aspects form the subject of the first two parts of his book ; the third is devoted to the final stage of Paul's development, as found in the captivity epistles.

The first book, then, is concerned with the idea of 'The People of God'—the idea which the Jewish people had of themselves, and which was taken up by the first Christians, conscious of being 'the remnant,' the Messianic community. This idea includes also other elements from Judaism which the Christians found fulfilled in themselves—the sonship of Abraham, the *ekklesia*, the holy and elect ones.

But Christianity is not merely a continuation of Judaism. It has certain specific characteristics, centred above all on the person of Christ. These are studied in the second book : the idea of what faith involves, the accession of the gentiles, the technical expression 'in Christ,' the body of Christ, the unity of the Church.

The third book is concerned with the soaring of Paul's thought in the captivity epistles ; a leap which Cerfaux shows, however, to be organically linked with his thought in the previous epistles. The 'wisdom of God' in *Corinthians* now becomes the mystery of God—a heavenly truth ; and since the Church is now seen as the heart of that mystery, it is a heavenly Church ; but like the other eschatological blessings which Christians hope for, it is also something possessed here and now by anticipation.

It is not often that one is tempted to use the word 'exciting' of such a scientific and scholarly work as this. But it is a subject which is bound to interest us ; and precisely because we all think we know something about it, there is excitement in watching and following such a skilled exegete remorselessly tracking down his prey—which is not a vague, rough and ready impression, not what we might think it is, not even what other scholars have said, but what Paul actually thought. That is his only purpose ; and therefore he is quite ready to disagree with opinions which had become current without, he thinks, sufficient warrant from the texts. The most notable example of this is in his discussion of the stock phrase, 'the mystical Body.' Most casual readers of the New Testament are inclined to see this tremendous doctrine ready-made in Paul's mind from the very moment

of his conversion : 'Saul, why persecutest thou me?' But besides being *a priori* improbable—this is not the way revelation usually works—Cerfaux shows that it does not actually fit the texts. In his earlier epistles, what Paul means by the 'body of Christ' is primarily the real, glorified flesh of our Lord. The many expressions denoting some relationship with this body 'in Christ, through Christ, with Christ'—are natural abbreviations for such ideas as : 'our faith in Christ, the doctrine about Christ, the hope that Christ guarantees', etc. Later, he develops the phrase 'the body of Christ' as a sort of metonymy—Christians are all united to this real Christ, and therefore all united to each other ; and this can be called the 'body of Christ'—without, however, implying at all a mystical personality. It is only in the period of the captivity epistles that the idea of the 'mystical Christ' does come forward—Christ who unites all, whose *pleroma* we are ; the extension of his real physical body.

This is, of course, only a suggestion of the skill and strength of Cerfaux's discussion of the subject. And even at the end of it, he dismisses the many other questions which are bound to rise, by remarking laconically that they are none of his business—if Paul does not go further, then it is not the task of his interpreter to go further ; where Paul is vague and imprecise, his interpreter must be also. One cannot quarrel with such honesty, which occurs frequently in the book. But after all, that is part of its excitement—that it does clearly point the way and leaves the reader free to pursue his own thoughts along this road so clearly marked out.

Needless to say, this is not an easy book. Cerfaux's very method which makes the book so valuable, makes it also difficult. It would certainly be much easier to read many of the articles, pamphlets and books which plague us at this time ; speculation is easy ; being sure of the facts is not so easy.

The translation seems to be no more than adequate. Certainly, it is not as easy to read as the French—which is difficult enough. Minor technical inaccuracies ('The Jews of the Exodus,' where Cerfaux writes 'the people of the Exodus' ; he would not dream of calling them Jews at that period of history) are no more than irritating ; but in some cases omission of words—in one case, four lines—intended to simplify, has actually increased the difficulty of following Mgr Cerfaux's tightly knit argument.

L. JOHNSTON

# BOOK REVIEWS

Jaques Dupont O.S.B., *Mariage et Divorce dans l'Evangile*, Abbaye de Saint-André, Desclée de Brouwer, Bruges 1959. pp. 240. 150 fr. belg.

This book is a consideration on the grand scale of the perennial difficulty caused by the 'Except it be for fornication' clause in Matthew's presentation of Our Lord's teaching concerning divorce (Mt. 19:9). These are the main points of Dom Dupont's thesis: the pronouncement on divorce belongs originally to the context of the discussion with the Pharisees, recorded in Mk. 10:2-12, and secondarily in Mt. 19:1-12. Our Lord condemns divorce unconditionally. Repudiation of the spouse is no more than a legal fiction, since remarriage after such a repudiation is really adultery. The restrictive clause in Mt. 5:32 and 19:9 is presumably added by Matthew, to give Our Lord's teaching a greater precision, in view of the particular needs of the Church. The clause is a true exception, and is concerned with the wife's infidelity. The final conclusions are: (1) Divorce is condemned. (2) A divorce does not dissolve a marriage. (3) 'When it is a question of infidelity, the husband can repudiate his wife without incurring responsibility for the adultery she would commit by marrying again (Mt. 5:32); but neither he nor she can marry again without committing adultery' (p. 157). Therefore Dom Dupont opts for the interpretation that whilst divorce is absolutely forbidden, separation is in Matthew explicitly allowed for reasons of infidelity. Thus he is the champion of the traditional interpretation, a fact on which he lays considerable stress.

Unfortunately this book is obscure and tedious. And in spite of its unnecessary length, due in large part to wearisome repetition, it pays scant attention to other views which have far more right to a hearing than we are led to imagine. The interpretation so clearly presented by Fr Richards in *Scripture* 1959, pp. 22-32, and which was also maintained by Fr Bonsirven, is given short shrift. A footnote informs us that a colleague who read the manuscript expressed his surprise at the trouble the author was taking to state and discuss Bonsirven's thesis, when a short note would have been sufficient. Yes, the author agrees, that is true, as far as the intrinsic interest goes, but he feels that there has been some sort of a campaign to foist it on the public, with the best intentions in the world of course (cf. p. 110, n. 4). I have never met with a remark more unbecoming a book of this kind.

In discussing the problem the following questions must be answered: Is the restrictive clause an addition by Matthew? If so, to what situation in the early Christian community does it provide an answer? Is the original context of Our Lord's pronouncement that of Mk. 10

or Mt. 19? What exactly is meant by *porneia*? Granted it is an addition by Matthew, must not the original context of the pronouncement be that of Mark, where the question is concerned with the legitimacy of divorce, and not with motives for divorce?

I gather that Dom Dupont considers the clause to be an addition by Matthew, but he also considers that it is intimately bound up with the dispute between the schools of Hillel and Shammai on what constituted a sufficient motive for divorce, or in other words, it is bound up with the different interpretations of Deut. 24:1. He repeats this with considerable insistence. But why must Matthew satisfy the need of the *Christian* community with regard to this question? What is this need? Dom Dupont states that there is a desire to take up a position *vis à vis* a mosaic prescription which was the subject of controversy among Jewish teachers. The text of Deuteronomy has still a meaning for Christian practice. No further explanation is given of this categorical but doubtful statement. And this is the crucial question. If the Christian community were aware of Our Lord's unconditional condemnation of divorce, it is difficult to imagine their concern about the rivalry of Shammai and Hillel concerning the motives of divorce. As for interpreting Deut. 14:1, one would think that a sufficient comment might be 'For their hardness of heart Moses wrote this commandment.' But in any case, this important point is very inadequately treated. To ridicule an alternative answer, by quoting Fr Richard's 'humorous' analogy (p. 113) separated from its complement (cf. p. 128), is in the circumstances most irritating.

According to Dom Dupont *porneia* means any moral laxity, compromising in this instance the fidelity of a wife. It does not have the more precise sense of illicit union or concubinage. In this a number of the foremost exegetes would agree with him. Dom Dupont does admit that there are reliable examples of *porneia* used in the technical sense of illicit union. But it cannot have this meaning here, because the restrictive clause is related to the interpretation of Deut. 24:1, and so *porneia* is the translation of '*erwāh*', as understood by the Shammaites, viz. moral laxity. Again no further explanation is forthcoming. Presumably it is obvious, because it is already obvious that Matthew is concerned with the famous Jewish controversy, because in turn it is obvious that the Christian community must take up a position in its regard. On the contrary there is nothing obvious in this matter, and it is at least possible that the Christian community was not concerned with motives for a divorce which in any case was forbidden. It is quite possible that Matthew has worded the question put by the Pharisees to suit his form of the pronouncement, and not *vice versa*.

Dom Dupont ends his book with an interpretation of the Eunuch



saying (Mt. 19:10-12). It refers primarily, though not exclusively, to the willing endurance of enforced continence, by those who are separated from their wives, in order to avoid the adultery of remarriage. Dom Dupont, therefore, does not accept, at least as the primary significance, that here we have an exhortation to voluntary celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, an interpretation which, he declares, 'One may call common; it is that of the early authors, and is found in the majority of the moderns'—in fact, as he grants in one instance, the traditional interpretation. But happily he does not harp on how untraditional he is in this matter, realising no doubt that it is irrelevant.

This book could be useful for purposes of reference, since it contains much valuable information. It offers a solution to a question which still remains open. But the way in which it does so is very disappointing.

T. WORDEN

Josef Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus*. Tr. Isabel and Florence McHugh. Mercier Press, Cork 1959. pp. 312. 30s.

The formal purpose of this book is to examine, in an objective and scholarly way, the trial and condemnation of Our Lord, and to decide who must bear the guilt of this crime. The question is obviously one of great historical interest, but I cannot help hesitating about the desirability and the benefit of such an investigation. One fears that every example of close concentration upon the historical details of any episode in Our Lord's life tends to obscure the far more important significance they have as the object and source of strength for our faith. There is certainly no logical reason why this should be so. But experience seems to show that in practice exegesis of the gospels which lays great stress upon historical detail makes little contribution to our realisation of theological truths. Be this as it may, it is most reassuring to find Dr Blinzler himself writing in his conclusion: 'The purely historical view, necessary and justified though it be, is superficial and one-sided if not supplemented by theological and religious considerations. In the light of faith in the Redemption the tragic event of Good Friday acquires completely new dimensions and depths. But above all, the question as to who was guilty becomes a question put to one's own conscience or, in the words of a nontheologian (K. S. Bader): "The inquiry into guilt, complicity, or innocence leads, so we feel, to no final goal here. Without Christ's

#### BOOK REVIEWS

death on the cross, no salvation ; without the verdict of his Jewish or Roman judges, no Redemption ” (p. 294-5).

This is a most informative book on every aspect of the arrest, trial, condemnation and crucifixion of Our Lord. It is also most reliable in its discussion of the problems, which are more in number and far more formidable than most people would think. In fact, not the least benefit readers of this book will enjoy is a greater appreciation of what the gospels are. On this important point Dr Blinzler makes some valuable remarks : ‘ The evangelists are, generally speaking, less interested in the purely historical course of events than in their content as religious doctrine ; hence their accounts of the passion must also be understood primarily as testimonies of faith, and not so much as biographical documents. We must not, *a priori*, look to them for a strict chronologically and topographically ordered narrative, satisfying to the historian, which takes into account all the essential circumstances, events and interconnections ’ (p. 39).

That this truth ought not to lead to any undue scepticism regarding the historical detail of the passion narratives is clearly proved by this book. An author who states clearly the limitations of his sources from the historical point of view, is all the more convincing when he sets out the reliable history they do contain. That is why this book is to be highly recommended.

T. WORDEN

*The Pamphlet Bible Series*, general editor Neil J. McEleney, C.S.P. Paulist Press, New York. Each pamphlet 75c. Annual subscription \$7.50.

I. Neil J. McEleney, C.S.P., *The Law Given through Moses*.

II. Ignatius Hunt, O.S.B. (edit.), *The Book of Genesis Part I* (1-25:19).

We are pleased to call attention to this new and rather unusual venture, of publishing the Bible in pamphlet form. There will be approximately 65 pamphlets in this series, their size being 6 × 9 inches and 96 pages. They will be issued monthly, sometimes two a month, and will each contain a portion of the unabridged Confraternity of Christian Doctrine translation of the Bible text, with a commentary by a member of the Catholic Biblical Association of America. It is intended that this commentary should be based on the latest results of scientific Biblical research. Each pamphlet will also contain two self-teaching quizzes, one on the text and one on the commentary.

Publication began on 25 January 1960 with the two pamphlets listed above. These two are excellent, and if the series maintains the

standards it has set and achieved in its first two booklets, it will without doubt be immensely popular and widely used in Catholic schools and study circles. In his introduction to the series Fr McEleney writes : 'The latest advances in Biblical science are here. Some of the opinions expressed may seem strange to those unaccustomed to recent developments in Biblical interpretation. Yet this is the material for which the scholars have often been besieged—the best results of Biblical study solidly founded in faith and fact.'

In the first pamphlet, which is an introduction to the Pentateuch, without any Biblical text, the findings of scientific literary criticism are stated in a simple and straightforward way, without ambiguity or embarrassment, and it is this fact more than anything else, which is striking to the reader in any way acquainted with Catholic publications at this very popular level, and in English. French Catholics have had comparable booklets for some considerable time. To give one example : after a clear statement of the legal content of the Pentateuch with its basic collections of laws, Fr McEleney writes : 'One fact may be emphasised here and explained later. The narrative elements of the Pentateuch relate events spanning a considerable period of time and culminating in the work of Moses. The legislation reflects this period, but it also continues the work of Moses, bringing his legislation into conformity with the new social and religious circumstances which later ages developed.' Equally clear and straightforward are the paragraphs on the gradual growth of the Pentateuch. The characteristics of each of the traditions to be found in the Pentateuch are considered separately, and the treatment of the question of Mosaic authorship is admirably worded : 'It is difficult to say how much of the Pentateuch as it now exists was written by Moses. Perhaps the extent of his literary activity will never be known. It is entirely possible that some of the traditional tribal materials had already been committed to writing before his time, but this is not likely to have happened on any extensive scale. How much he himself set down is debatable ; what form he gave the materials is unknown. The Ten Commandments and the bulk of the Code of the Alliance reflect the Israel of his day and are definitely Mosaic. To limit his influence, however, to the parts of the Pentateuch which he actually wrote, is to misunderstand the import of his life and work. Moses is the author of the Pentateuch in the primary meaning of that word 'author.' He is the source of it—the human source, to be sure ; God is its divine source. All subsequent re-workings of the traditional material, all later additions to the legislation, are made in the spirit of Moses and are covered with the mantle of his authority.'

The second pamphlet, containing the first part of Genesis, gives the text of Chapters 1-25:19, preceded by thirty pages of introduction,

written with a like clarity by Dom Hunt. A good example of this may be taken from his introduction to Gen. 3: 'Profound theology, clothed in symbolism and human ways of speaking about God, continues in Chapter 3. The serene picture of the garden is now troubled by the appearance of a serpent. This serpent, though never explicitly identified with the devil in the account itself, has been universally understood as referring to him. His whole seductive and subversive manner of acting and speaking betrays his identity. The "serpent" was probably introduced as a subtle attack on the false forms of Chanaanite worship and the sexual abuses of the writer's time. Actually, he did not know, any more than we do, the precise nature of the first sin. Like all sin, it involved pride. But could he not be more specific? He knew that this was impossible, but, though ignorant of the nature of that first sin, there was no reason why he could not, by his description, strike out at the practices of idol worship with their attendant sex abuses. In the Chanaan of his own time, the image of the serpent had some part in pagan rites, most likely as a fertility symbol. By introducing the devil in the form of a serpent, and depicting Man's fall as coming through Woman, the writer lashed out against the sins of his own age.'

The quotations will have shown how well this series is succeeding, in its aim to make available at popular level, the findings and indeed the whole spirit of modern Catholic Biblical studies. These simple pamphlets are highly recommended not only to teachers for the benefit of their pupils, but to the many adults for whom Scripture study remains an arrogant and destructive force laying siege to their faith. This series will make such ignorance even less excusable.

T. WORDEN

*Grail E. P. Records of the famous Gelineau Psalms*, London 1959. 12s 3d each. 1. *E. P. Record G. R.* 25. 2. *E. P. Record G. R.* 26.

These two new recordings of the English versions of the Gelineau psalms are very welcome. On the first record, the choir of St Edmund's College, Ware, with Owen Brannigan and John McHaffie as soloists, under the direction of the Rev. Alexander Wells, with Dom Gregory Murray at the organ, sing Psalms 23, 138, 116 and 135 (all slightly abbreviated); the 'Blessings' from Dan. 3:52-6, and the Magnificat. The singing of the choir is good, accurate and manly, and probably very typical of a normal rendering of the psalms. As in all choral singing, there are places where one needs the printed words in order to follow: but these are few. The soloists, of course, sing with artistry.

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Psalm 23 (24) is dramatised with the help of trumpets ; so too (tympani also here !) psalm 135 (136). To listen to these 'concert' performances, as one would style them, helps considerably to appreciate the power of the psalms. The Magnificat is, strangely, less impressive—perhaps because there are many powerful choral versions with greater appeal.

On the second record we have psalms 83, 125, 4, 102 and 62, with the Canticle of Simeon. This time a mixed choir is used, that of Saint Luke's, Pinner, with a section of the choir of Digby-Stuart College. The soloists are Theresa Marrow, John McHaffie and the Reverend Wilfrid Trotman, who directs the singing. Deliberately, there is variety of treatment : unison ; harmony—sometimes wordless ; alternation of voices and soloists. Hence an interesting and instructive record. One notices how any lack of restraint in the soloist sounds immediately wrong ; how a local accent can be very conspicuous, if inoffensive. On the whole I prefer this record to the previous one.

How far these Gélineau psalms will appeal to the faithful is hard to say. Some are immediately attractive ; others probably too severe for the average ear. It is heartening to read that 70,000 copies of the first Grail booklet, *Twenty-four Psalms and a Canticle* have been sold. I recently heard a teenage girl whistling the melody of the antiphon of psalm 135 ! Obviously our grammar schools are alive to the possibilities of this simple and devotional psalmody. As their pupils join parish choirs, we may hope to see it more and more widely used. These records are highly to be commended to all who are ignorant or unconvinced, for their enlightenment, and to the enthusiast for their enjoyment.

J. L. ALSTON

## BOOKS RECEIVED

(The mention of books in this list neither implies nor precludes subsequent review)

Frederick C. Grant, *How to read the Bible*. Thomas Nelson, Edinburgh 1959. pp. 136, 15s.

Bernard Basset S.J., *Gospel Questions and Inquiries*. Sheed and Ward, London 1959. pp. 240, 8s 6d.

Louis Lochet, *Apparitions of Our Lady, Their Place in the Life of the Church*, tr. John Dingle. Herder, Freiburg & Nelson, Edinburgh 1960. pp. 127, 15s.

Hubert Jedin, *Ecumenical Councils in the Catholic Church, an Historical Survey*, tr. Ernest Graf O.S.B. Herder, Freiburg & Nelson, Edinburgh 1960. pp. 254, 21s.

Henri Cazelles (edit.), *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*. Letouzey et Ané, Paris: Fascicule XXXI, 1958, 2,000 fr. Fascicule XXXII, 1959, 2,000 fr.

In Fas. XXXI the important article on Myth is completed; George writes on the Book of Nahum, and Lefèvre on Nehemias and Esdras. There is an article on the teaching of Newman concerning Scripture by Seynaeve. There are other articles, mainly archeological and biographical. The most significant contribution in Fas. XXXII is an article on the New Year Feast: Drioton deals with Egypt, Largement with the Sumero-Akkadic religion, Nichel with Judaism and Cazelles with Israel. Cothenet writes on Anointing, De Fraine on Offering and Barucq on Oracle and Divination. There are articles on the Name Jesus by Dupont, on Nomadism by Charles, and others of topographical and biographical interest.

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